

## **Proposed First State Trails and Pathways Plan**

In a bold vision for the creation of a truly multi-modal transportation network in Delaware, Governor Jack Markell requested the Departments of Transportation and Natural Resources and Environmental Control to research and develop a Trails and Pathways Plan to establish a world class interconnected network of shared use pathways and trails that will support non-motorized travel and recreational trails opportunities within the State of Delaware for Delawareans and visitors alike.

The State of Delaware recognizes the benefits of an integrated non-motorized pathway and recreational trail network to provide opportunities for pedestrians and bicyclists to travel safely and efficiently and to expand outdoor recreation opportunities while enjoying the natural, cultural and historic assets of Delaware. It also recognizes the benefits of an integrated multi-modal transportation infrastructure in improving the economic and environmental sustainability of communities, thereby improving the quality of life for all citizens.

The goals of the Governor's vision is to:

- 1) Re-establish Delaware in the Top Ten of Bicycling Friendly States.
- 2) Build a world-class interconnected, non-motorized trails and pathway network.
- 3) Support the creation of local jobs related to bicycling, including construction, maintenance, cycling-related services and eco-tourism.
- 4) Link Delaware communities internally to support more sustainable local economies and externally expand the linkages between the state's neighborhoods, towns and cities.
- 5) Develop and implementing sustainable practices in the creation of Delaware's pathway and trails network, such as supporting native landscaping and natural habitats.
- 6) Support more healthy communities by providing safe and affordable active transportation choices.
- 7) Develop workable strategies for ongoing maintenance and upgrading of existing facilities.

### **Building on the Present**

In June of 2011, the General Assembly passed Senate Concurrent Resolution 13, which requested the study of the building and maintaining of non-motorized travel connections within and between communities, cities and towns in Delaware and to link these connections to form uninterrupted networks for walking and bicycling.

At the request of the Governor, the General Assembly also allocated \$7 million in appropriations within the FY 2012 Capital Improvements Budget (Bond Bill) for the purposes of initiating the design and development of a statewide integrated non-motorized network. The Trails and Pathways Plan will recommend ways to use these funds to leverage additional private and federal investment in the network.

**Memorandum Of Understanding**

In order to form the First State Trails and Pathways Plan, the Secretaries of the Delaware Departments of Natural Resources and Environmental Control and the Department of Transportation are drafting a Memorandum of Understanding to work together with their respective personnel to accomplish the following:

- a) Evaluate existing pathways to determine how these systems can be improved and /or linked to improve safety, connectivity, and increase bicycle and pedestrian usage for recreation and transportation;
- b) Build upon of existing plans including the East Coast Greenway Feasibility Study, New Castle County Greenway Plan, municipal and county comprehensive plans and trail concept and master plans;
- c) Develop a Statewide Pathway and Trail Plan that outlines a network of bicycle and pedestrian systems that will serve both recreational and alternative transportation goals, building on today's existing trails and pathways and connecting communities;
- d) Develop a master list of projects and subprojects using the attached system strategy map (see attached) to include timelines, estimated costs and priorities;
- e) Streamline any and all permitting and right-of-way acquisition processes necessary for each project, in order to minimize the time needed to render each project open for use;
- f) Use the FY 2012 State funds and future appropriations to leverage additional federal and private funding to expand the resources available for use in constructing the projects included in the master list mentioned above;
- g) Develop a plan including estimated costs and specific responsibilities for the maintenance and rehabilitation of paths over time;
- h) In choosing priority projects consider the potential jobs and opportunities for Delaware contractors that would be created as a result of these projects and the maintenance Plan and, where practicable, choose those alternatives that are likely to create the most employment opportunities for Delawareans;

- i) Use current, state-of-the-art, resource management and model sustainability practices in the construction and maintenance of the projects (e.g. storm water, native landscaping/habitat, etc.).

DelDOT and DNREC agree to create an inter-departmental team to develop and recommend for implementation a set of activities for FY 2012 and the subsequent four fiscal years. Special care is being taken to identify the financial resources that are anticipated to be needed for FY 2013. The Departments will provide recommendations to the Governor's Office and the Office of Management and Budget for consideration in the Governor's FY 2013 Budget Proposal to the General Assembly in January 2012.

### **Community Input:**

DelDOT and DNREC will be consulting with the Wilmington Metropolitan Area Planning Council (WILMAPCO), Kent County/Dover Metropolitan Planning Council, Delaware Greenways, Delaware Bicycle Council, Bike Delaware, Pedestrian Advisory Committee, Recreational Trails Program Advisory Committee, Council on Greenways and Trails, municipalities and counties with regard to the priority order of projects prior to presenting the proposed list of projects to the Governor for consideration for funding. Once the list of projects is prioritized, a series of workshops on the recommended trails will be held with property owners, community groups, and other affected citizens to gather further input on the locations and types of trails to be constructed.

We are also encouraging all stakeholders and community groups to participate in letters of support for potential funding opportunities.

### **Organizational Responsibilities**

As part of this effort, DNREC and DelDOT will designate responsibilities and accountabilities for various stages of the project to specific individuals or groups of individuals. These activities may include coordination with county/municipal implemented projects, concept development, engineering design, construction, and, subsequently, maintenance of the system.

Due to the integration of the non-motorized trail system into the State's public road infrastructure, the portions of paths and trails that are outside of State Parks will need to be built to state standards and any federal standards that apply as designated by the U.S.DOT. This will require DelDOT to be involved in the design and engineering of the projects. For projects that are within State Parks, DNREC will take the lead in the design and engineering with DelDOT providing technical support as requested by DNREC.

DelDOT will take the lead in the bidding, solicitation, bid evaluation, and construction administration for the projects that are outside of State Parks.

The financial stewardship of the Plan will be shared by both agencies. The annual state appropriation (when awarded) will be included in the state capital account as part of the General Fund annual appropriation. DelDOT will include the trails in the process for determining supplemental state and/or

federal capital appropriations as part of its Capital Improvements Program. DelDOT will also coordinate federal grant activities, including application, monitoring and reporting. DNREC will manage private foundation and private sector funds as part of the Plan.

DelDOT and DNREC will coordinate any and all efforts to solicit additional funds including additional federal grants and private sector and private foundation funding.

The activities outlined herein will be re-evaluated each year and a report on the progress of the Plan will be submitted jointly to the Governor each December. The coordination of these activities will be completed within 5 years of the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding, unless re-designated by the Governor.

### **Proposed Priorities for Implementation**

The First State Trails and Pathways Plan outlines both a long-term strategy and near-term objectives. Ultimately, the long term objective is to create a statewide link from Northern New Castle County to Southern and Eastern Sussex County. However, an objective in the development of the Trails and Pathways Plan is to balance the statewide network with regional and local trail networks which can be utilized independently. A statewide network without these regional clusters would be very limiting in allowing communities to access important amenities, including parks and commercial areas, and the communities themselves. It would also limit access to transit options to complement the trail network since most transit access points are located primarily in the regional locales.

The projects under consideration for the Trails and Pathways Plan are derived from existing plans, including the East Coast Greenway Feasibility Study, New Castle County Greenway Plan, municipal and county comprehensive plans, local bicycle, pedestrian and / or trail concept and master plans and existing trail networks as part of Delaware's robust parks system. The network includes shared-use pathways both on-alignment and off-alignment with the existing transportation network between communities, and facilities within parks systems.

DelDOT and DNREC have identified projects for priority implementation that strive to meet multiple outcomes and objectives outlined above. Below is an outline of proposed projects that would serve as the first phase of the First State Trail & Pathway Initiative:

#### New Castle County:

- 1) Northern Delaware Greenway Trail – This 7.1 mile long trail connects many suburban and city neighborhoods, schools, businesses, and community services while linking Fox Point State Park, Bellevue State Park, Bringham Woods Park, Rockwood Museum, Alapocas Run State Park, and Brandywine Park and Zoo. Complete the following NDGT gaps: a) Talley Road -0.25 miles; b) 2.1 segment between Rt. 141 and Mt. Lebanon Road; c) 0.5 mile segment between Bellevue State Park to Fox Point State Park separated by a 4-lane highway, I-495, and the Northeast rail corridor;

- d) 0.25 mile segment from Brandywine Zoo to Market Street; and e) upgrade or resurface portions of the trail.
- 2) Newark to Wilmington pathway - Phase 1, design a new 'commuter'/recreational pathway from Newark to Fairplay Station (6.0 miles).
  - 3) White Clay Creek State Park – Build and/or improve 5.3 miles of shared-use recreational trails that create community connections that link the existing Pomeroy Rail Trail. Develop a 0.2-mile on-road segment that links existing trails and create two state road crossings. Investments are directed at shared-use trails that serve both recreational purposes and alternative transportation modes.
  - 4) Auburn Heights – Create a recreational trail system across the Red Clay Valley within the Auburn Heights Preserve (a State Park property) and a community rail- trail link to Hockessin. Project will result in 6.3 miles of new shared-use trail.
  - 5) New Castle Industrial Track Trail – Extend the existing 2.1-mile long trail adding 3.2 miles of new trail and bridge. This project includes a signature bicycle/pedestrian bridge over the Christina River and a connection to the Wilmington Riverfront. This trail is also part of the East Coast Greenway Trail – a Maine to Florida trail.
  - 6) East Coast Greenway Trail – This trail traverses Maine to Florida; in Delaware it coincides with portions of the Northern Delaware Greenway Trail and Newark's James Hall Trail. This project would complete segments at these locations: Cauffiel Parkway to Pennsylvania line; Route 273 to US 13; School Lane to Airport Road; Route 58 gaps to Continental Drive; and Route 4 pathway improvements.
  - 7) Lums Pond State Park – Build on the park's existing 16-mile trail system creating a bicycle/pedestrian shared-use trail. This 2.6-mile trail will begin at the park entrance at Howell School Road continue internally along Buck Jersey Road to the intersection of Howell School & Route 71. The new shared-use trail will link neighborhoods north, west and east of the park and create 0.25-mile shared-use trail connection to the C&D Canal Trail.
  - 8) Chesapeake & Delaware Canal Trail – Create a 9+ mile trail along the Canal waterway linking Delaware City and Lums Pond State Park. Future phases will extend to Chesapeake City, Maryland resulting in a 14-mile long trail.

## Kent County:

- 9) Dover to Clayton Rail Pathway – Connect the existing Scarborough Road shared-use pathway at Delaware Technical and Community College in Dover with the town of Clayton along an existing rail right-of-way.
- 10) Capital Bikeway – Extend the existing bicycle/pedestrian pathway approximately 0.7 miles through the center of Dover to the Legislative Hall and the state government complex with connections to the St. Jones River Trail. This project extends the existing 1.5 mile pathway that lies between Schutte Park and West Street.
- 11) St. Jones River Trail & Isaac Branch Trail – Two segments define the existing 3.2-mile St. Jones Trail and Isaac Branch Trail. The upper section begins in Dover’s Silver Lake Park extending to Division Street and a sidewalk between Division and Lookerman Streets help create community connections.
- 12) Isaac Branch Trail - lies between Route 13, extending through the DelDOT campus then terminates at Route 10. A mid-section connector of approximately 1.5 miles is needed to connect the upper and lower segments as well as neighborhoods, businesses, parks and the state government complex.
- 13) Killens Pond State Park – create linkages to existing trail systems within DelDOT rights-of-way along Killens Pond Road (0.2 mile).

## Sussex County:

- 14) Georgetown-to-Lewes-to-Cape Henlopen State Park – This is rail-with-trail that follows a State-owned rail line between Georgetown and Cape Henlopen State Park. Creating linkages between these communities and the state park will serve both recreational trail users and ‘commuters’. Distances = 2.3 miles - Cape Henlopen to Lewes; 6.4 miles - Lewes to Cool Spring; and 7 miles - Cool Spring to Georgetown.
- 15) Junction & Breakwater Trail – The 5.9-mile Junction & Breakwater Trail is located between Gills Neck Road to Hebron Road (Rehoboth). Extensions at both ends of the existing J&B Trail are needed to create community connections to Lewes and Rehoboth. This trail serves recreational trail users and is a vital corridor for alternative transportation.

- 16) Cape Henlopen State Park – Expand the existing 8-miles of shared-use bicycle/pedestrian trail by connecting the Park’s northern and southern portions. This project will construct a 1.8-mile long trail from the park’s Gordons Pond area to Herring Point and upgrade a 0.7 mile trail connection from Herring Point to the Campground. Filling this gap creates continuous bike/pedestrian recreational and alternative transportation opportunities between Rehoboth to Lewes.
- 17) Assawoman Canal Trail – Connect the municipalities of Bethany, South Bethany, and Ocean View, and several residential communities via a 2.5-mile long shared-use trail along the Assawoman Canal. This trail will link to existing sidewalks and pathways serving both recreational and alternative transportation users.
- 18) Fred Hudson Road – Create a 0.7-mile shared-use pathway along Fred Hudson Road. This project will link neighborhoods, commercial areas, and Fresh Pond Area (Delaware Seashore State Park). It is a key pathway needed to create an off-road network in the Southeast Coastal region. This segment will provide close linkage to the proposed Assawoman Canal Trail.
- 19) Trap Pond State Park - create linkages to existing trail systems within DelDOT rights-of-way along Wooten Road (0.1 mile).

Evaluate existing trails and pathways to determine system upgrades that create linkages/connectivity, improve safety, and increase bicycle and pedestrian usage for recreation and alternative transportation.

**Long-term Strategy for Statewide Connection:**

The long-term strategy for statewide connections begins with the cluster of communities which have a network of pathways as noted above. Statewide connections will require significant right-of-way and the integration of on-alignment shared-use pathways as roads are constructed or rehabilitated as part of the Delaware’s Complete Streets Policy. Construction of the bicycle and pedestrian facilities for on-alignment pathways will be completed simultaneously with road projects. This set aside should be initially focused on projects along major corridors, such as Route 113, Route 1 and Route 301 and other major arterial roadways.

Another option to consider is a joint agreement with Norfolk Southern to utilize rail service roads and other right-of-way along the Delmarva Secondary to traverse the state. The State also owns several of the rail lines on the eastern end of the Delmarva Secondary in Sussex County. This consideration comes with significant but not insurmountable barriers, such as liability issues on non-railroad usage on the easements, upgrading rail crossings and bridges to accommodate bicycles, and the cost of easement purchases. However, if a joint partnership was to be considered, it would be a significant opportunity to

promote a public/private partnership worthy of consideration by the federal government in the application of discretionary funding.

A final option is to utilize existing State-owned right-of-way to build the pathways. This would include Route 1, Route 13 and Route 113. A priority must be given to construction of the pathways to ensure safety of users since the environment will include high-speed vehicles. Approvals from the Federal Highway Administration will be needed.

**Investment:**

The State has already committed \$7 million in Bond Bill appropriations to support the trails identified in the near term consideration of the Trails and Pathways Plan. While only a portion of the total estimated costs, this funding is will serve as important seed funding that will leverage significant external funding . The recommendation is to:

- a) maximize opportunities to leverage State resources with Federal and private funding;
- b) request on-going appropriations from the General Assembly;
- c) apportion federal and state funding annually in the Capital Transportation Plan to support on-going upgrades and new networks; and
- d) incorporate maintenance funding either through government, private and / or non-profit contribution.

**Maintenance of the Network**

One of the most difficult challenges is to ensure maintenance of the trails after construction. The State must consider the placement of funding into a trust account to provide perpetual maintenance and upgrades of the system. Currently maintenance of trails and pathways competes with other projects in the Capital Transportation Plan. DeIDOT and DNREC envision funding for maintenance of the pathways in part through government assistance, and non-profit and private contribution. It is hoped that a sinking fund can be created to fund the maintenance of the trails in a way not subject to changes in government appropriations nor competing with the priorities of other parts of the system. This funding mechanism will be developed through additional planning with all stakeholders in the project.